

Mediterranean, and NATO is supporting the Polish-led division in Iraq. NATO is widening the circle of its friends by creating a new chapter in our relationship with Russia. NATO members are reaching out to the nations of the Middle East to strengthen our ability to fight terror and to provide for our common security. And we're discussing how we can support and increase the momentum of freedom in the greater Middle East.

Our unity and our commitment to freedom carried us to victory in the cold war, and they showed us the way to victory in the war on terror. Together, Europe and America can lead peaceful nations against the dangers of our time. Europe and America can advance freedom and give hope and support to those who seek to lift the yoke of isolation and fear and oppression. That is the mission that history has set for NATO—this great and confident alliance of 26 nations—and we proudly accept this mission.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:42 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister

Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Defense Minister Nikolai Svinarov, and Foreign Minister Solomon Pasi of Bulgaria; Prime Minister Juhan Parts, Defense Minister Margus Hanson, and Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland of Estonia; Prime Minister Indulis Emsis, Defense Minister Atis Slakteris, and Foreign Minister Rihards Piks of Latvia; Prime Minister Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas, Defense Minister Linas Linkevicius, and Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis of Lithuania; Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, Defense Minister Ioan Mircea Pascu, and Foreign Minister Mircea Dan Geoana of Romania; Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda, Defense Minister Juraj Liska, and Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan of Slovakia; Prime Minister Anton Rop, Defense Minister Anton Grizold, and Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel of Slovenia; Prime Minister Fatos Nano of Albania; Prime Minister Ivo Sanader of Croatia; Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski of Macedonia; NATO Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer; Gen. James L. Jones, USMC, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe; and former President Slobodan Milosevic of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

## Remarks on the National Economy in Appleton, Wisconsin *March 30, 2004*

Thank you all very much. I appreciate the warm welcome. Please be seated. It can get pretty cold here in the winter, but that's a really warm welcome, for which I'm grateful. Thanks so much for coming out.

Bill, thank you for your kind introduction. Thank you for putting up with my entourage. Thank you for setting this deal up.

I've got some things I want to share with the good people of Fox Valley and Wisconsin, some of the challenges that we face

as a country, my absolute determination to overcome those challenges, to lead our Nation for a better day for every citizen.

I've got a lot of friends here in this State. I took one of them with me. *[Laughter]* And that was Tommy Thompson. Tommy is doing a great job. I gave him a tough job to do, and he's handling it with such class. He's really a fine, fine leader. You trained him well. *[Laughter]* I was looking for him on his Harley, driving in today, but I guess at 38 degrees, it's a little chilly to be on your Harley. *[Laughter]* But he

sends his best, and I want to thank you very much for raising Tommy the right way.

I also want to thank all the entrepreneurs who are here. One of things—I love to be in the presence of entrepreneurs and small-business owners and dreamers and doers. After all, it's—to me, it's one of the characteristics of our country, the fact that we're an optimistic people, the fact that we're risktakers, the fact that we're job creators, that we care about our fellow citizens. The characteristics of America are what really enable me to say that there's no challenge we can't overcome by working together. I appreciate so very much the—[applause].

I want to thank the Chamber of Commerce, Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce for hosting me. I want to appreciate the mayor, Tim Hanna, for coming out to say hello. My advice to the mayor is, fill the potholes and empty the garbage. [Laughter] All will be well. [Laughter] But Tim, I appreciate it. It's good to see you again. Thank you for your leadership and your service. I want to thank all the State and local officials who have come today. I also appreciate your service to your communities and your State.

Today when I landed, I met Gloria Grandone. Where are you, Gloria? There she is, up there. Gloria is a volunteer, a person who is a mentor, a person who is involved with helping people go to college, a person who helps people become more self-sufficient and financially secure. The reason I bring up Gloria and her willingness to volunteer, see, I think that happens to be the strength of the country, the fact that there are fellow citizens who love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

Oftentimes, America is described as being strong because of our military—we'll keep our military strong—or we're described as being a strong nation because we're wealthy compared to other nations. And that's good, by the way. It's better

to be a wealthy nation than a poor nation. But nevertheless, that's not our strength. Our strength lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. Our strength in America exists because there are people like Gloria who are willing to take time out of their life to help somebody.

My call to our fellow citizens is to love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. Mentor a child. Put your arm around somebody who hurts. Find shelter for the homeless, food for the hungry. All of us working together can change America, one soul at a time. Gloria, thank you for the example you set.

Let me walk through the last little bit of history so that when I make my point that we've overcome challenges, you'll understand the challenges that we have overcome. First of all, the stock market began to decline in March of 2000. That matters, by the way, if you're concerned about savings and you own stocks. In other words, the psychology of the country began to get affected when people started opening up their accounts of their portfolios and noticed that their worth was diminishing. A lot of people who retired noticed their worth was diminishing. Pension funds—if you run a 401(k), you noticed that things were changing.

And then the country headed into a recession in early 2001. A recession means we're going backwards, not forwards. A recession is negative growth for three quarters. If you ask any business leader here, they can tell you what it's like to try to manage during a recession. There's uncertainty. Your workers are getting anxious. Sometimes you had to lay people off. A recession is tough for a country to handle. It's a challenge. The challenge is how do you come out of the recession. We passed tax cuts, which I'm going to talk about in a minute, which made the recession one of the shallowest in our Nation's history.

But then we had another challenge shortly thereafter, and that is an enemy attacked us. We weren't thinking about attacks in

the scale of which they attacked us. It was a new thought for America. After all, most of us baby boomers grew up thinking that oceans would protect us forever. It changed our way of thinking. The attack means that anybody in a position like I'm in must deal with threats before they materialize. That's one of the lessons of September the 11th. We just can't sit back and hope that oceans protect us now. We must take every threat seriously.

It also affected our economy. It hurt us economically. We lost a million jobs shortly after the attacks of September the 11th, and that hurt. Remember, we had to shut down the stock market. Airplanes weren't getting up in the air. It affected us; it just affected us. And yet, we're a strong nation who refused to be terrorized. We refused to give in to the terrorists.

We resolved as a nation that we would do everything we can to protect our homeland. But the best way to protect the homeland is to chase the terrorists down and bring them to justice, which is precisely what we're doing.

I laid out a doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." By the way, when the President says something, you better mean it. It turns out in this job—I, of course, meant it. And the Taliban found out what we meant. They didn't yield, and so I unleashed a great United States military. I did so to uphold the doctrine. We wiped out the ability for the terrorists to use Afghanistan as a training facility.

We also liberated people, liberated about 25 million people from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind, so barbaric—[*applause*]. Now the country is changing. There's women's rights. There's equality under the law. Young girls now go to school, many for the first time ever, thanks to the United States and our coalition of liberators.

We started to recover from September the 11th. The resolve of the country, by the way, is incredible when tested. It's a

nation of people of deep character. Perhaps it's because we've got a lot of people of deep faith in our country.

But we discovered shortly thereafter that there were some of our citizens who must have not been raised right, because they didn't tell the truth. There was corporate scandals in America that betrayed the trust. When somebody betrays the trust in our world, it can affect confidence. I mean, if you're not sure whether or not the accountants are telling the truth, it's hard to invest. These corporate wrongdoers cost people their jobs, cost a lot of people their savings. It affected our psychology. We had to overcome the hurdle.

We passed tough laws, by the way, in Washington, and now the message is very clear: We will not tolerate wrongdoing in the boardrooms of America; we will hold you to account if you lie or cheat. But we overcame that.

As I mentioned to you, it's important for this country never to forget the lessons of September the 11th, and that is, when we see a threat, we must deal with it before it fully materializes. That's one of the clear lessons of that horrible day in our history. I looked at intelligence from Iraq and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and the Members of Congress saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And so, in the fall of 2002, I went to the United Nations Security Council and said, "We all see a threat. Let's come together and deal with the threat. Let's say to Mr. Saddam Hussein, 'You have one final chance to disclose and disarm, for the sake of peace and security.'"

A lot of people remembered that he was a person that had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He's a person that had terrorized the neighborhood. He's a person that was paying suiciders to kill innocent citizens. He's the person that tortured people. He's the person that had rape rooms. He's the person that had mass

graves. He was a threat. Saddam Hussein once again chose defiance, and so I had a choice to make: Do I trust the word of a madman, or do I take action to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

This is an historic time. We're going to get it right in Iraq. Iraq will emerge as a free society.

I'll tell you a very interesting story. I was having Kobe beef with Prime Minister Koizumi from Japan. Laura and I were over there, and by the way, she sends her greetings. She's a great First Lady, I might add. Very interesting conversation, because we're talking about how we should work together to deal with Mr. Kim Chong-il and the nuclear weapons program on the Korean Peninsula. In other words, we were working together on a common threat. It dawned on me in the midst of the conversation, had we not gotten the post-World War II peace right, an American President and a Japanese Prime Minister wouldn't be talking about how to deal with a common threat. It also dawned on me during the course of the conversation that when we get it right in Iraq, some day an American President will be talking to an elected President or Prime Minister of a country in the heart of the Middle East, talking about how to deal with the threats of a future generation.

These are historic times. A free and democratic Iraq will change the world.

It's a hard job in Iraq. After all, there are terrorists who want to stop the progress of liberty. And there's a reason: They understand that a free society is not in their interests; a free society is a peaceful society; a free society is one that will put the conditions of terrorism out of business. That's why we love freedom in America. See, the other thing I believe in, I believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world. I believe freedom is the Almighty's gift to each man and woman in this world.

On your TV screens, starting in 2002, were the words "March to War." I don't

know if you remember that. That's not conducive for creating jobs. Think about what it means, "March to War." It's a negative thought. One of the hurdles we had to overcome was the business about going to war. If you're trying to plan your future, whether you're an employer or employee, you're not going to be all that optimistic, thinking that your country's marching to war. We're now marching to peace. We've overcome that hurdle.

We've overcome four major hurdles, when you think about it. People say, "How can you be so optimistic about our country?" And the answer is, "Because I've seen what we've come through." And guess what? Our economy is growing. Interest rates are low. Inflation is low. Homeownership rates are the highest in history. More people are owning their home. There is a minority homeownership gap in America, but now more minorities own a home than ever before, which is incredibly positive. When people own something, they have a vital stake in the future of this country. Manufacturing activity is up. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. We've overcome a lot.

Wisconsin is helping lead the growth of this country. Farms, factories, and offices are shipping high-quality goods all across America and all throughout the world. The State's unemployment rate is down from a year ago, below the national average, I might add. The economy is on a path of growth because we acted.

You see, the role of Government is not to create wealth but to create an environment that encourages economic vitality and growth, is to create the grounds for the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. That's the role of Government. And that's why I went to Congress and said, "Listen, we've got problems, economic problems, and the best way to deal with those problems is let people keep more of their own money." When a person has more of her own money, she demands an additional good or a service.

And the way our economy works, somebody will meet that new demand for a good or a service by producing a good or a service. And when somebody produces a good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work. That's the way the economy works. The tax relief came at just the right time.

We also accomplished some other objectives in the tax relief. Remember, I argued that if we're going to provide tax relief, let's provide it for everybody who pays taxes, so that Government is not in the business of picking winners and losers when it comes to tax relief. The fairest way to deal with tax relief is to say, "If you pay taxes, you get relief."

We also increased the child credit to \$1,000 per child. By the way, that's very helpful if you happen to be a mom or a dad. We reduced the marriage penalty. My question to the Congress is, what kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? We ought to be encouraging marriage. After-tax incomes in America have been lifted by 8.4 percent since the end of 2000. People have got more money, and it's making a big difference.

I also want you to know I understand job creation. Seventy percent of all new jobs are created by small businesses. It seems like, if that's the case and you're worried about somebody finding work, you want to make sure the small-business agenda is vibrant and foremost on our agenda. And it is. Because, you see, most small businesses are Subchapter S or sole proprietorships. I see a lot of people nodding their heads. A sole proprietorship or Subchapter S corporation means that the business pays tax at the individual income tax. And if you're paying tax at the individual income tax as a small business and all taxes get reduced, small businesses have got more money to invest and to expand.

We also provided incentives for capital investment. We raised the amount of the limit to \$100,000 from \$25,000 that the small business can deduct for new capital

expenditures. What I'm telling you is, is that small business is a direct beneficiary of the tax plan that we passed. It's an integral part of making sure that the environment for the entrepreneurial spirit is just right.

Another way to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong is to get rid of the death tax. The death tax is a bad tax. A lot of farmers want to leave their farm to their family and not to the Government. A lot of small-business owners are dreaming big dreams, not only because they want to help somebody find a job but they also want to leave their business to whomever they choose. The problem with the death tax is, they tax you while you're alive, and then they tax you again after you die. And that doesn't seem fair. And a lot of people who own a small business or a farm, in order to pay the death tax, have to liquidate their assets in order to do so, which means it is impossible to pass your assets on, in many cases, to whomever you choose. Congress wisely put the death tax on its way to extinction, for the good of the entrepreneurial spirit here in America.

This economy is going through a fundamental change. We're growing, which is great. One of the reasons we're growing is because we're incredibly productive. You've heard about productivity increases. That means one worker that used to be able to produce 5 units can now produce 15 units. That's what productivity means. A productive society is a society that will generate more wealth, and that's very positive. In other words, the more productive you are, the wealthier your society becomes. A productive society means America will remain more competitive, will be able to expand and grow, not only internally but externally, because if you're a productive company here in America, you have a better chance to compete. And remember, our system is based upon competition. If you're a productive company in America, you have a better chance to compete with companies overseas.

It's a fact that the more productive you are as a worker, the better you get paid. But the problem is, as I mentioned, many companies are able to fill new orders and don't have the—don't have a need to expand because they're more productive. In other words, it's possible to grow our economy and not have people find new jobs. And that's a problem we face today for some workers.

This is called a period of transition. That's an economist's word for things aren't going too well for you. [*Laughter*] And I understand that. I understand that people are worried about the job they have. They're worried about whether their children can stay close to home where they were raised and find work. A productive society is positive in many ways, but for the worker who needs new skills, it's not so positive in the short term.

So we have got to do something about it. We've got to deal with the economy the way it is. Many people are working, and more and more people are working. But there are some who, frankly, feel like they're being left behind, and that's not right. The role of Government is more than just providing unemployment insurance; it's to provide a sound strategy to make sure our economy continues to grow and people find the skills necessary to be productive employees in the 21st century. Those are the challenges we face.

Some in our Nation's Capital respond a little differently than I will. They want to increase Federal spending dramatically. The problem with that plan is somebody has to pay for it, and that somebody is going to be you. That's who will pay for it. In order to pay for more spending, you'll hear the language "tax on the rich." When you start raising income-tax rates up, you're raising on small businesses. If the tax relief helps small businesses, the corollary to that is that when you raise those taxes, it means small businesses are going to pay. If 70 percent of the new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes absolutely no

sense to be taking money out of their coffers to expand the role of the Federal Government.

Tax and spend is the enemy of job creation. Taxing and spending in excessive amounts in Washington, DC, is not creating an environment for the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. Quite the contrary. It will diminish demand. It will make it difficult for people to start their own businesses and to expand.

There's another issue we're facing as well in the Nation's Capital. That's whether or not we're going to build walls around America, whether we're going to isolate ourselves from the world. I call it "economic isolationism." When you hear people talk about, "Let us reconsider free trade agreements," what they're really saying is, is that perhaps we ought to wall ourselves off from the rest of the world. See, I think that would be absolutely wrong for America to be so pessimistic about our ability to compete that we've become economic isolationists, that we erect barriers to trade, that we're so—that we lack confidence, that we say to our farmers and ranchers, our entrepreneurs that we don't think you can compete. See, I believe just the opposite. I believe this Nation can compete anywhere, anytime, anyplace, so long as the rules are fair.

Look at it this way. America's got 5 percent of the world's population. That means there's 95 percent of the people out there that should be buying products that say "Made in the USA." It's important to understand that exports, the ability to sell overseas, to be able to make something here in Wisconsin and sell it elsewhere, is an important part of your economy. Dairy farmers are selling their goods overseas.

I read this, and I wasn't quite sure—it says that Wisconsin cheese is being sold in France. [*Laughter*] That's a good cheese. Oshkosh Truck sells overseas. Harley Davidson sells overseas. Wisconsin exports last

year were worth \$11.5 billion. See, Wisconsin is making products the world wants to buy. Wisconsin's exports to Canada rose last year. Exports to Mexico rose. Exports to China rose fourfold in the last 4 years. In other words, people are finding jobs here in Wisconsin because they're helping make products that people want in other countries. Exports equal jobs. It's important for people to understand that.

Nationwide, 97 percent of all U.S. exporters are small and medium-sized businesses. You know, a lot of folks say, "Exports—you got to be a big guy to be able to export." No, there's a lot of small-business owners and entrepreneurs and medium-sized businesses that are making products, goods, and services, that people want. An important part of our economy is the small-business sector, as I told you. Companies with fewer than 20 employees make up nearly 70 percent of all U.S. exporting firms. So when you hear the talk about, "Let's wall off America from the rest of the world," I want you to remember that we're talking about walling off small businesses from opportunities—opportunities to sell a product and, therefore, opportunities to eventually hire somebody.

The other thing it's important for people to understand is that foreign companies recognize how great the U.S. workforce is. I mean, we're very good at what we do. We've got fantastic workers here in America, incredibly productive people. And therefore, there's a lot of foreign-owned companies that are interested in bringing their business here. A hundred thousand workers in Wisconsin work for foreign-owned companies, half of them in manufacturing. Fiskars Brands employs U.S. workers. It's a Finnish company. Kikkoman Foods, they make soy sauce. They employ U.S. personnel.

In other words, when you hear about trade, just remember, trade means selling product overseas, but it also means welcoming foreign capital here in the United States to employ people, so they can find

work. It's an important part of the equation to know that confident trade policy not only means the sale of goods, but confident trade policy means people want to set up their plants here.

I was in Greer, South Carolina, at a BMW plant selling BMWs into Germany. We've got great workers in America. We ought not to be fearful of the future. We ought to be confident of our capacity to compete.

And so, the question is, what do we do about trade policy? And that's what I want to spend a little time talking about. Five—for five decades, Presidents have made the decision that U.S. markets should be open, for the good of our consumers. In other words, when there's competition, it generally means better price. Other markets haven't been open to U.S. goods. So it seems like to me, the logical thing to do, rather than shutting down our own market, which will hurt consumers and hurt opportunity, is to spend time opening up other people's markets. And so when you hear me talk about negotiating trade agreements, really what we're doing is leveling the playing field. What we're really doing is make sure America has a chance to compete on the same terms that people can sell into our market.

And if they don't respond, there's some things we can do. See, if we say, "Our market is open, and yours isn't, so open yours up," rather than shutting ours down and creating trade wars which will jeopardize jobs, make it harder for small business to exist, there are things we can do. For example, we filed the first World Trade Organization case against China because of their unfair tax policy. We got Canada to stop exporting subsidized dairy products into the United States. We won a major international case against Mexico's telecommunications barriers. In other words, this administration is not going to—refuses to accept the doctrine of economic isolationism but instead says, "We'll use the

tools necessary to make sure that the playing field is level.”

Japan is buying American apples. If you’re an apple grower, that’s good news. India is buying American almonds. My point is, not only are we focused on industries like the semiconductor industry, we want people buying U.S. farm products too. We’re good at growing things here in the United States.

Open trade means fair trade. It means that the buyer and the seller—that if we’re a buying nation, it means the selling nation must open its markets too. That’s what I’m talking about. It’s important to be confident here in America because we’re good at what we do, and our policies ought to reflect that.

A lot of talk about jobs going overseas. There’s a lot of uncertainty in the marketplace for some people looking for work. I understand that—I understand that. But the best way to deal with that in my judgment is to make sure America remains the best place in the world to do business so that our job base will expand. The more vibrant the small-business sector, the more likely it is somebody’s going to find work. The more vibrant the business sector, the more likely it is jobs will stay right here at home. That’s what people have got to understand.

Let me talk real quick about some things we need to do. We need to stop harassing small-business owners and entrepreneurs with endless amounts of regulation and paperwork. I know there’s a lot of Federal forms. My problem is, I can’t guarantee that they’re ever read.

Secondly, like you, I’m concerned about the rising costs of health care. It’s an issue for consumers. It’s an issue for employers. If you talk to small-business owners, they’re concerned about being able to provide their employees with a good package for health care. There are some things we can do. One thing we must not do is turn over the health care industry to the Federal Government. There’s a philosophical tug-

of-war in Washington, DC. I believe the Federal Government would make matters worse. I believe the marketplace and empowering consumers will make matters better.

One way we can control health care costs is to allow small businesses to share risk through association health care plans. In other words, big companies are able to pool risk because they’ve got a lot of employees over which they can spread risk. Small businesses don’t have that advantage. I believe small businesses ought to be able to pool risk across jurisdictional boundary to get the same benefits, the same economies of purchase, that big businesses get.

We passed a new aspect to health care, which I think a lot of small-business owners and employees will find very interesting. They’re called health savings accounts. This is the opportunity for people to put money into a health savings account tax-free, earn money tax-free, withdraw it tax-free to meet certain health care costs, and then any major medical or larger health care costs are covered by a catastrophic plan. Now, what this does is it puts the consumer back in charge of health care decisions, as opposed to bureaucracies or Government. What it also does is it helps control the cost of health care. If you look into it as a small-business employer, I think you’ll find it is an imaginative way to help your employees have affordable health care.

The other thing we need to do in order to make sure we hold the cost of health care down is to have medical liability reform at the Federal level. There’s too many junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine. A lot of docs practice defensive medicine because they’re afraid of getting sued. But guess who pays? Small-business owners and employees, that’s who pays. A lot of docs are tired of getting sued, so they’re moving out. Maybe it’s happened in your community. That means not only is the cost of medicine going up, the cost of health care going up, but there’s fewer docs available to practice their trade.



Listen, if you get hurt, you ought to have your day in court. But the system in many places looks like a lottery, and there's only one winner, and those are the trial lawyers who sue and sue and sue.

We need other tort reform to make sure America's a good place to do business so jobs stay at home. We're close to getting a reform on class-action lawsuits. Perhaps some of you have been caught up in these class-actions lawsuits. It's—again, sometimes it's a gravy train, not for those who are the plaintiffs but the people representing the plaintiffs. We're close, but the trial bar is tough in Washington, DC. They're able to hold up a lot of stuff in the United States Senate, which is discouraging, because good tort reform will make it easier for people to find a job here at home, will make sure the environment for the entrepreneurs is good and strong.

There's another thing we need to do here in America. Look, if you're a manufacturer in Wisconsin, you need to make sure you've got energy so you can manufacture your product. We have a problem in America because we don't have an energy plan. It doesn't make much sense when you're a giant nation like ours not to have an energy plan, but we can't get it out right now. It's stuck. I'm calling upon the House and the Congress to reconcile their differences and get an energy plan on my desk that will encourage—to my desk that will encourage clean coal technology so we can burn coal, a plentiful supply, in a clean way, so that we can encourage more exploration of natural gas.

Natural gas is absolutely vital for many manufacturers here in Wisconsin. You've got to have energy in order to make sure your business is viable. We need to modernize our electricity system. We got a wake-up call last summer when parts of our country were shocked by a rolling blackout. If you're a businessowner and you're trying to expand your business, if you're trying to make a product and if you're worried about whether or not you're

going to get any power, it's very difficult to be optimistic about your future. We need to encourage conservation. What we need is an energy plan so we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We're debating a highway bill right now in Congress. I look forward to signing a 6-year bill without raising your gas taxes. We don't need to be raising the Federal gas tax. Gas taxes would hurt the economy. There are some in the other party in Washington who would like to raise gas taxes. I think it would be wrong. I think it would be damaging to the economy, not positive to the economy.

Also, speaking about highways, the Nation must stay on the leading edge of technology. I want to make sure broadband technology is available for every home in America by the year 2007, and that, shortly thereafter, there's adequate competition so consumers get to choose. There's nothing like choice, by the way, if you're a consumer, to make sure that a product stays reasonably priced. And there are ways to do that.

We ought not to tax access to broadband at the United States—in the United States Congress. And we've got to make sure that the regulatory environment is conducive to making sure broadband extends throughout America. There's some practical things we can do. But for America to be competitive, to make sure jobs stay at home, we've got to stay on the leading edge of technological change. And the broadband technology is going to be—it's going to be just amazing. It's going to be amazing for small-business owners. It's going to be amazing for people who work out of their home and are productive citizens. It's going to be amazing for education opportunities. It's going to be amazing for health care. We need it, and we need to get it out as quickly as possible in a price-sensitive way for the consumers.

Finally, these tax cuts that I'm talking about are set to expire. Congress giveth, and the Congress taketh away. [*Laughter*]

And if you're a small-business owner, it's hard to plan for your future if you're uncertain about your tax liabilities. If you're wondering whether or not the tax—taxes that—tax relief today is going to be taken away, it is not good for planning. People who plan need to have a steady environment, not an unpredictable environment.

It's also not good if you're a mom or a dad raising your child to be paying more taxes right now. And if Congress doesn't make the child credit permanent, it means it's a tax increase on somebody with a child. If you're married, that marriage penalty is going back up unless Congress makes the tax relief permanent. If you are in the 10-percent bracket, it means that bracket is going to become squeezed if Congress doesn't make the tax cuts permanent. For the sake of job creation, for the sake of keeping jobs here at home, we need to make the tax cuts a permanent part of our Tax Code.

Now that I've got you stuck here—[laughter]—we're going to talk about education right quick. A economy which is changing, an economy in transition, is an economy that better make sure people are educated to take advantage of the new jobs being created. In a lot of parts of our country, there are jobs going begging because people don't have the skills necessary to fill them. In some older industries, jobs are not as prevalent as some of the new industries. Nurses, for example—there's a nursing shortage. We've got to make sure people get the skills necessary to be able to fill the new jobs.

We can't make somebody say—decide to go to work. That's in their mind. But we darn sure can help somebody get the skills necessary to take advantage of the jobs which are being created. We can help somebody become a more productive citizen. Remember, higher productivity for a worker means better wages.

And I've got some plans to do so. It starts, by the way, by making sure every child can read and write and add and sub-

tract. We passed a good law in Washington. It's called the No Child Left Behind Act. The principles behind that law are, one, we trust local people to make the right decisions for the communities in which they live when it comes to their public schools. But for the first time, the Federal Government is asking the question, are we getting any return for our money we're spending? It's called accountability. It means that—[applause].

We've increased the Title I or elementary and secondary school budget by 49 percent since 2001, which is good. But as importantly, we've started to say to the State of Wisconsin, "Measure, so we can determine whether or not it's working." How can you tell whether or not things are going well in the education system if you don't measure? You can't. And guess what happens in a system that doesn't measure? Kids just get shuffled through. And guess who gets shuffled through? The so-called hard-to-teach. That would be low-income, inner-city, African Americans, parents who may not speak English as a first language. It's easy to quit on those kids. "Just going to move them through." What accountability says is that we're tired of moving kids through. We're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We believe every child can learn.

Things are improving around the country because we are holding people to account. By the way, the accountability system is not to punish anybody. It's to determine whether or not the curriculum is working. It's to make sure that the methodology makes sense. It's also to catch problems early and correct them before it's too late. There are some problems that are almost too late. We've got plans to help junior high and high school kids learn the basics of reading and math before it is too late—very good intervention programs.

But one of the things I'm most excited about is using our community college system. We've got a great strategy to make

sure the community college system is a vibrant part of job training programs all across America. I hope you've got a good community college system here. The definition of a good system, by the way, is one that is flexible and open-minded, so that when employers come and say, "These are the kinds of people we need to hire," that the curriculum changes and actually trains people for the jobs which exist.

There's nothing like the Chamber of Commerce being able to say, "We've got a fantastic community college system here. If you move your business here, the community college will make sure—will help train people for the jobs you need." A more productive worker is a worker that's going to make more money.

I remember going to Mesa Community College and met a woman there that was a graphic design artist. I think she'd been one for 15 years. She got a scholarship—and by the way, there's money available to help people go back to school. She got a scholarship to go back to the community college, and she took a technical course. Upon graduation, which—I can't remember the exact number of months it was, but it was a reasonable period of time—her starting job at Cable One paid her more than her 15th year as a graphic design artist.

That's the definition of becoming a more productive worker. If you increase your productivity by going back to school, it makes you obviously more employable for the jobs which exist, but it also raises your own standard of living. Education is a crucial part to make sure that jobs here in America stay home and that the job base can expand in a confident way.

So those are some reasonable things that the country needs to do: to stand with the people, not stand against them; to make sure that we unleash the great talent of

America; to make sure that we capture the entrepreneurial spirit which makes this country so unique and such an exciting place for people to live; practical things to do to make sure jobs stay here at home and people can work and do their duty as a responsible citizen.

Let me conclude by telling—speaking about responsibility, I do think one of the interesting things that's happening in America is we are ushering in a period of personal responsibility, which stands in stark contrast to kind of an old culture which said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else." People in the country are beginning to understand that there is a—you're responsible for loving your children. If you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in which you—in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. Just don't hope for some magic response from a far-away Government. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

We've got a fabulous country. There's nothing we can't overcome. Thank you for coming today. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Welch, president, Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce & Industry, who introduced the President; Mayor Tim Hanna of Appleton, WI; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

## Remarks to Wisconsin First-Responders in Appleton March 30, 2004

Thank you very much. I was just looking for a salad. [*Laughter*] Thank you all for your welcome. Thanks for letting me barge in. Please sit down.

Ed, thanks for letting me come in to say something to our first-responders here in this State. First, I want to thank you for your service to our country. We're at war, and we better be ready on all fronts. And so the first-responder effort and the strategy with the local, State, and Federal government is really an important part of making sure that we do everything we can to do our solemn duty, which is to protect our fellow citizens from harm.

We've got a big and vast country, which makes the task particularly tough. So the best way to protect our citizens from harm is to find the enemy, bring them to justice, to get them before they try to get us. And that's exactly what the country is trying to—[*applause*].

We're on the hunt. There's a lot of really fine folks wearing this Nation's uniform that are making the world and America more safe and secure. If you happen to have a relative in the military, you thank them on behalf of the Commander in Chief for this job they're doing and for the sacrifice that they're making. This military of ours is fantastic. It's really got unbelievably capable people. My job is to make sure they get the best—the best equipment, the best training. Any time you put anybody in harm's way, we have a solemn duty to make sure that they're well-equipped. And there are a lot of good folks out there running them down right now, and that's exactly what this Government must do and will continue to do.

I am—I just came from giving a speech on the economy, but part of the challenges we face is—my job as the Commander in Chief is to provide people as direct assessment I can about the future of this country.

And the problem we face right now is, we love freedom, and we're not going to change, and the people that we fight hate freedom. That's just the way it is.

I've always felt that September the 11th was going to be—the type of war that started that day was going to be the type of war that I constantly have to explain to the American people. It's going to be different. I suspect there's some old vets here. It's easy to find infantry and airplanes and a flotilla of ships. It's hard to find people that are so cold-blooded in their murder that they hide in caves and the dark corners of cities. But that's what we're going to do. We're going to find them.

The other thing is, is that you've just got to know that any time you see a threat, after September the 11th, you've got to take it seriously. It used to be that oceans would protect us, that we could say, "Well, there's a threat over here. We can deal with it if we feel like it, but we're protected by oceans." September the 11th taught us another lesson, that this Nation must always deal with threats before they fully materialize, that we've got to—in order to do our duty, in order for me to do mine as the Commander in Chief, if we see a threat, we'll take action of some kind. Obviously, the military option is the last option, not the first.

But I want to remind you that I saw a threat. I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat in Iraq. The United States Congress looked at the very same intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat as well. We went back to the United Nations and said, "Look, this guy is a problem. He's a threat. He used gas on his own people. He used weapons of mass destruction on his own